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AN INDIAN LOOKS
AT AMERICAN EDUCATION

BY
HUMAYUN KABIR

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

FOUR articles, which appeared in The Eastern Economist on the subject of American Education, have been collected together and, at the request of many readers, are now published in pamphlet form.

Professor Humayun Kabir is one of the foremost authorities on education in India. He has been the Secretary of the Ministry of Education for many years and has visited various countries, including the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. to assess educational development. He writes with an authority, both theoretical and factual, which is unique.

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E. P. W. da Costa.

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AN INDIAN LOOKS AT AMERICAN EDUCATION

I—Who Shapes Policy ?

With my experience of American Education limited to two short visits of about six weeks each, it would be hardly feasible to attempt any detailed or a comprehensive survey of the American system. No one can judge another national system of education without much greater preparation and study. Nevertheless there is something to be said for the first impressions of a visitor from abroad, as he may raise questions about things which the native expert takes for granted.

In any case, problems of education are basically the same in all countries. India and America in particular have many things in common. Both are large countries and show wide varieties in geography and climate. Both are inhabited by people derived from many racial and cultural traditions. Both have sought to evolve a common culture which will give unity of outlook and purpose in the midst of all these diversities. America is the oldest democracy but one of the newest countries of the modern world. India is one of the newest republics in history.

In both India and the United States, universal free education is an integral part of national policy and regarded as both a condition and a guarantee for democratic rights and liberties. In both, there is the problem of expanding the system of education sufficiently quickly to meet the growing demands of the nation. Both face the problem of maintaining and in fact improving standards simultaneously with the extension of facilities to cover not a mere privileged section but the whole nation. Since America began the process of educating the entire community earlier and has carried it much farther than India, some of the policies and practices developed there may be not only of interest but of service to us.

One may at the very outset say that there are many things to admire in American education. America is perhaps the first country to provide free and compulsory education to all its nationals to the end

of adolescence. For abler students, education beyond adolescence is also for all practical purposes free. Not only is education free and universal but it is greatly diversified to meet the needs and fit the aptitude of boys and girls of diverse abilities and tastes. It also seeks to enrich the experience of children in schools by bringing to them services and facilities which in the past have been the prerogative of only the children of privileged classes. Education is thus a great factor in equalising opportunity for all and democratising society. In fact, it has been called the greatest single instrument for increasing social mobility in the United States.

These features of American education are as well calculated to serve the interests of India. We also need education which will be diversified to cater to the diversified needs and aptitudes of our adolescent boys and girls. We also want that education should serve as a principle of social mobility and equal opportunities for all. America's past history is partly responsible for this emphasis on education as an instrument of social mobility, but equally important for this purpose is the pattern of educational organisation in the United States.

One question which baffles the foreign visitor and in fact at times even the native American is as to who shapes educational policy in America. There is the US Office of Education but its main task is to collect information and publish reports. If you ask an average citizen, his first response will be that education is organised on the basis of local communities. Educational policy is thus 'prima facie' a local concern and in fact most Americans would violently react against any suggestion of federal or State control over the shaping of educational policy. The federal authorities are themselves anxious to impress that they have no say in policy and serve as merely a clearing house. Distrust of federal authority is seen even in the status and emoluments attached to the post of the US Commissioner for Education. He is the head of the federal educational organisation but his tenure is generally annual and his salary less than what a School Superintendent in a prosperous city may get. Readers may remember that recently the US Commissioner for Education resigned his post to become Superintendent of the Detroit School System. One of the reasons he gave for his resignation was that School

Superintendent had a salary of 30,000 dollars against the 14,000 dollars attached to the post of US Commissioner for Education. The powers of the US Commissioner for Education and of District Superintendents are also roughly in the same proportion as their salaries.

The State Commissioner is in some respects in a happier position. Education is a State subject and as such regulations for school buildings, class hours, preparations for teachers, etc., are largely determined by the State. The State Commissioner has thus a large say in educational policy in the State than the US Commissioner for Education has for the country as a whole. With this background, it should not surprise the reader that the District Superintendent of School has a smaller area but often a large influence than the State Commissioner.

The State departments of education and the State Commissioners are, however, reluctant to admit that they have the last say in educational matters. They protest that the local communities have a deciding voice in shaping all educational policies. The local authorities on the other hand often complain that their autonomy is more apparent than real. They point out that their very Constitution is subject to legislation by the State which also prescribes the conditions under which schools are to function. The State also exercises its authority through inspecting and supervising officers and by prescribing conditions of service of teachers. If there is a powerful State Commissioner and he makes up his mind to introduce an innovation, it would be difficult if not impossible for a local community to resist it.

I have not so far mentioned the Teacher Training Colleges. They also have a very important say in the shaping of educational policy at the elementary and the secondary level. One peculiar, and to my mind unfortunate, feature of American education is the divorce between universities and teacher training institutions. The State departments have largely organised the teacher training colleges and as such one would think that the State Commissioner could exercise influence on policy through them. The teacher training colleges have however become largely autonomous and developed an almost independent life of their own. Their influence on educational

policy and practice is exercised not directly but through the convention which restricts the appointment of City Superintendents and State Commissioners mainly to alumni of teachers' training colleges.

Last but not least among the forces which shape educational policies in America are voluntary and non-official national organisations. Americans are fond of forming societies for conducting their affairs in almost every sphere of life. Nowhere else perhaps is there such a passion for organisation and doing things through societies and committees. This has affected the educational scene as well. The N.E.A. or National Educational Association is the most powerful but not the only national organisation which influences educational policies in the country. These professional and semi-professional associations often lay down rules for the recognition of teachers and powerfully influence the construction of curriculums and syllabuses. They have their representatives in almost all teachers training colleges ; City Superintendents and State Commissioners of Education are often members or past members of such organisations. Neither the US Office of Education nor even the State departments of education would lightheartedly challenge their authority or reject their recommendations. If the State Commissioner with his legislative and administrative powers is reluctant to question the authority of these organisations, one can easily imagine that the local communities have hardly any chance of going against their advice.

One may now attempt an answer to the question ; who shapes educational policy in the United States ? The US Office of Education disclaims any share but nevertheless is a quite powerful factor through its studies and reports. Any report must from the nature of the case be selective. The US Office of Education is thus instrumental—though often in an indirect manner—in drawing attention to specific problems and suggesting specific remedies. The State departments of education play a more active and in some cases a more aggressive role. The local communities are zealous of their rights and many devoted men and women consciously dedicate themselves to educational work. The national organisations and associations have a large say in determining the content of education as well influencing professional practice. The teacher training institu-

tions also exercise a silent but steady pressure on educational practice by training succeeding generations of teachers. It is the interplay of these five factors which ultimately determine educational policy in the United States.

Local autonomy in education is thus not as extreme as some ardent advocates claim. National uniformity is provided through the indirect influence of the US Office of Education, the pervasive influence of the national organisations and the teacher training institutions and the interplay of the influence of State departments of education. Nevertheless the emphasis on local autonomy calls out the loyalty and devotion of some of the finest men and women in the nation. It is both evidence of the general concern for education and a major factor in developing local initiative and leadership. Nothing makes a more vivid impression on a visitor from abroad than the ability and devotion of men and women interested in education in even the smallest of communities.

AN INDIAN LOOKS AT AMERICAN EDUCATION

II—Secondary Education

In the last article, I briefly reviewed the various institutions and forces which together shape American educational policy. With so many different forces acting on one another it is inevitable that the final outcome should largely be a compromise which does not fully satisfy any of the participants. Nowhere is this so evident as with secondary education in America.

If one talks to authorities in the Universities, they tend to blame an unsatisfactory secondary system for almost all the defects in American education. Social philosophers and the general public are also often vehement in their criticism of its defects. Perhaps the strongest defenders of secondary education in America are to be found among State and City Superintendents, the Teacher Training Colleges and the authorities and teachers of secondary schools. Their support is somewhat suspect. Many people feel that in defending the system they are in fact defending themselves. Yet, there is a great deal to be said in defence of American secondary education. Its supporters are never tired of pointing out that whatever may be its other shortcomings, it has been the single greatest instrument in forging an American nation out of diverse elements who have poured into the country in the last hundred years.

An unprejudiced observer would certainly give great credit to the American secondary system for its contribution in developing an American nation. In pursuit of this end, secondary education in America has gradually developed a range and diversity which is found hardly anywhere else in the world. Courses have been split into their component units so that every child can find something fitted to its capacity. Freedom from tradition has also enabled the American educators to experiment with new forms. The recognition that different children have different aptitudes and profit by different types of courses is one great American contribution to educational

practice of the world. In theory, all countries accept this truth, but it is only in modern America that it has been made a principle of educational organisation.

There has, however, been a tendency to carry the principle too far. Subjects have been included in the curriculum which have little if any educational significance. Children are permitted and at times encouraged to select subjects where there will be almost a guarantee against failure. Free option for children often means in practice the pursuit of a variegated and unrelated number of different courses which qualify them for graduation from school but do little either to give them a unified body of knowledge or develop habits of systematic and sustained thought. In addition, there is at times an extravagant emphasis on what are called extra curricular activities which are supposed to develop the personality of the pupil. In the name of serving the individual needs of individual children, a pattern has thus been evolved in which it is possible for an adolescent to go through high school without learning some of the basic values of human knowledge and culture.

Another unfortunate result of this emphasis on individual ability and aptitude has been the tendency to relax standards. These are quite often determined with reference to the capacity of the least able among the pupils. A misunderstanding of what democracy entails has further strengthened this tendency. Democracy certainly demands equality of opportunity for all but somehow many in America have misinterpreted this to mean equality of performance. Naturally, such equality can be achieved only by lowering standards.

The emphasis on diversity and the wrong interpretation of democracy have together led to a considerable lowering of standards in secondary education. I have been told that by and large American boys and girls of 17 or 18 are not expected to know as much as their compeers in Europe or even in Canada. There is no reason to think that American youth are in any way less intelligent or earnest than the youth in Europe or Canada. The difference in attainment must therefore be attributed to the difference in demand made on their energy and attention. Some American educationists seek to defend the fall in standards by referring to the increase in enrolment. They point out that in other countries to this day and even in America in

the past secondary education was reserved for privileged group of only 15 to 20 per cent of the adolescents, who were drawn mainly from well-to-do families. As against such conditions, America today seeks to provide secondary education on a universal scale. Their argument seems to be that when in place of a small group of selected pupils drawn from the privileged classes, all children from all sections of the people begin to attend secondary school, the standards are bound to fall.

I have not been able to see the validity of this contention. I have argued with American friends that their position rests on a confusion between quality of mind and class. If it were the case that in the past only the ablest among the adolescents went to school while today everybody does so, there would have been some force in their argument. This would presuppose that selection for secondary schools was then made on the basis of merit alone and without any reference to social origin. This was not however the case. What actually happened then was that practically all adolescents from certain privileged groups and classes engaged in studies. Only a small minority came from the rest of the community. Today, the pupils in secondary schools are drawn from all sections of the people. The increase in secondary school population is thus due to the fact that all classes in the country are now contributing their quota in more or less the same proportion.

A fall in the standard of education from such increase in enrolment would follow only if it could be proved that the proportion of able children is larger in the privileged classes. There is however no proof for this. On the contrary, all available evidence seems to indicate that ability is distributed more or less evenly in all sections of the community. It may also be pointed out that to hold that the privileged classes are intrinsically superior in ability would challenge the basic assumption of American or indeed of any democracy. Increase in enrolment cannot therefore be the cause of the fall in standards of secondary education.

The main reason for this fall is the reluctance to make adolescents work. Discipline of children is regarded as an essential part of education in Europe. In America, the attitude to children and adolescents is on the whole much softer. This is also evident from

the prevailing social attitude that no adolescent should face failure or discouragement during school life. Critics of such an attitude ridicule it by calling it "the theory of social promotion". They point out that hardly any pupil in a secondary school is allowed to fail. He may not be able to satisfy the teachers in any subject but nevertheless he is promoted so that neither he nor his parents may suffer from frustration or loss of prestige.

It is certainly good to encourage adolescents but when the result is to fix standards in such a way that nobody fails, it may and at times does lead to a caricature of education. If certain assignments seem too difficult for a child, there are two ways of dealing with the situation. One is to require a greater effort from the child with such assistance as the teacher may reasonably give. The other is to cut down the assignment till it comes within the easy reach of the child. The two solutions are not of course incompatible. What usually happens is to combine the two in varying proportions. In most countries the emphasis is on first while in America the tendency is to favour the second device.

The American approach seems less satisfactory for more reasons than one. All education should require a certain degree of effort and striving. In Browning's words, "What is a man worth unless his reach exceeds his grasp?" Also, we are liable to under-estimate the capacity of children and adolescents. When they are given a task which challenges them, they can and do rise to great heights. Still more serious are the effects of relaxation of standards on a growing child. Adult life will be full of struggle and it is part of education to learn to cope with and overcome difficulties. To learn to bear success and disappointment with an even temper is the best training an adolescent can receive.

With the onset of adolescence, the child discovers new interests and tastes. It also feels a new influx of physical and emotional energy. If this energy is not fully utilised in useful and creative channels, it is bound to find undesirable outlets. An empty mind is the devil's workshop, but, if possible, it is even more so in the case of adolescents. Secondary education covers the whole period of adolescence. If standards of education are sufficiently stiff, it means not only a higher degree of attainment for adolescents but also the

use of their abundant energy in useful work and play. No surplus is thus left for juvenile excess or lapse. That higher standards can be attained is proved by the experience of Europe and Canada. If the demand is made of American youth, they can attain the same standards as their fellows in other countries and in demanding this effort, some difficult problems of indiscipline and delinquency may be automatically solved.

American practice regarding the training and certification of teachers has also been regarded as an important factor for deterioration in standards. The professional courses are given in Teacher Training Colleges which are generally independent of and at times hostile to the Universities and the liberal arts and science colleges. One result of this separation is the loss in the quality of recruits to the profession. Quite often, students who fail to secure admission into the Universities crowd into the training colleges. Even in the case of abler students, their lack of college education often makes them incapable of taking full advantage of the professional courses. The British and the Indian practice on insisting on a first degree as a condition for entrance to the training college seems to be more appropriate. It is interesting to note that some American universities have also introduced graduate courses of training on similar lines.

Rules of certification seem to place greater emphasis on professional courses and techniques of teaching than on the candidate's general ability or knowledge of the subject matter or understanding of children. Professional courses have of course their value and they have helped to raise the status of the teacher. Over-emphasis on the techniques however tends to defeat the purpose of such courses. My own view is that professional courses are most helpful if they follow and do not precede the actual experience of teaching. Rigidity of the rules of certification tends to perpetuate existing low standards in secondary schools. If a sufficient number of young and enthusiastic teachers with adequate knowledge of the subject matter were inducted in secondary schools, the probability is that they would demand and exact higher standards from the pupils. This would lead to an all-round improvement of secondary education in America.

AN INDIAN LOOKS AT AMERICAN EDUCATION

III—Colleges and Universities

In speaking of collegiate education in America, one has to make a sharp distinction between the first two years in college and the subsequent years. College education is invariably organised on the basis of a four-year under-graduate course followed by one or more years of graduate study. The first two years of the under-graduate course show, and sometimes in sharper relief, the shortcomings of secondary education. A large number of alternatives are offered and students can choose and pick almost at will without much regard to the needs of systematic and sustained study. The result is that many students do not take their work seriously but waste some of the most precious years* of early youth. Since they find little interest or purpose in their work, it is not surprising that wastage is also quite large. Large numbers drop out before they finish their course. I was told that even in so well known and specialised an institution as the M.I.T., hardly half the entrants come out successful within the stipulated period. The peculiar circumstances of America with a chronic shortage of manpower at every level encourages this tendency and draws out many students before they finish their course.

The bachelor's degree is obtained after four years of under-graduate study but the standard is not generally as high as in British Universities. One main reason for this is the lower standard of American secondary education. A freshman in a British University is usually doing work which the American under-graduate does in his second or third year. Another reason is that the first two years in the American college often approximate in character to school education. In spite of hard and strenuous work in the last two years of under-graduate study, the American college-man cannot therefore catch up with his counter-part in the British University.

The position is, however, largely rectified in the course of

graduate studies. Only those who have some interest or purpose continue with their studies in college and university. Also, students in the latter years of the under-graduate courses are as a rule more serious and earnest. The better motivation and the greater maturity make for harder worker. This is even truer of the graduate students. With almost unlimited opportunities for profitable employment for all, only the most serious-minded students go in for graduate studies. The latter years of under-graduate and still more the years of graduate study in America compare very favourably with similar study elsewhere. This, however, involves a greater effort and strain on the students because of the less adequate preparation in the earlier stages.

The majority of graduate students go in for a doctorate which can in theory be obtained in two or three years after the bachelor's degree. In actual practice, very few students take it in less than four years. Five years may be regarded as the general average. There is a master's degree which can be taken in one year after the completion of the under-graduate course, but for most students the master's degree is only a half-way house to the doctorate. One of the unfortunate developments in American education has been the debasement of the master's degree:

The principle of local autonomy has also added to the complexity of the University scene. It is sometimes said that America has 2,000 Universities. The statement is a little misleading and it will be truer to say that there are about 2,000 institutions which award their own degrees. Such an institution may be a giant University with a student population reaching to 30 or 40 thousand. Or it may be a small college with only a few hundred students on its rolls. Some are private institutions and fairly strongly entrenched in tradition. Others are amenable to public pressure and political control. It is thus not surprising that there should be an enormous variation in standards. In fact, some of the older Universities—often referred to as the Ivy League Universities—tend to look down on some of the giant Universities established and run by the State. The State Universities in their turn have grades of snobbery as regards one another and the Ivy Universities.

University men invariably complain about the inadequacy of

secondary education. This dissatisfaction has led many American educationists to demand universal college education for American youth. They use two main arguments in asking for such great expansion of the facilities for higher education. Their first contention is general and would hold not only for America but for all countries. They argue that in old hierarchal societies, the more difficult problems were dealt with by a small minority of highly educated and able persons. In the democratic set-up of the modern world, every man has a say in the affairs of society and Government. Government also has assumed much more extensive functions than in the past. In addition, the growing complexity of modern civilisation and increasing contacts between different countries of the world demand a much higher degree of knowledge and maturity in the average citizen. Secondary education, however, good it may be, is no longer adequate for preparing the average man for citizenship in the modern world.

The second argument is based on the specific American situation. Critics point out that American standards of secondary education are low. Very often its products are half baked youths who have neither acquired systematic knowledge nor developed maturity of thought and judgment. The responsibilities of citizenship have in the meantime increased and are continually increasing. Recent contacts of Americans with the world outside have served to emphasise further the importance of turning out better citizens. Since the first World War, America has played an increasingly important role in the world affairs. She has helped generously with goods and services nations which have needed them. Even her worst enemies have not been able to accuse her of imperialism. America has been a benefactor of millions of people in Europe, Asia, South America and Africa. These benefactions have not, however, always evoked the response which one would expect. In fact, in some areas of the world, criticism of America has increased almost in direct proportion to the assistance which America has offered to the people.

Americans who have been worried by and seek an explanation for this phenomenon have found one of its causes in defective secondary education. They say that secondary education in America does not contribute to the growth of an integrated personality. The

haphazard combination of a number of different courses is in their view responsible for arrested growth. In consequence, some of the characteristics of adolescence are continued into adult life. This creates many problems within the country but the consequences outside are even more serious. These critics say that the foreigner's dislike of Americans is at least in part due to this persistence of adolescent characteristics. American educators argue that if the period of universal education was extended by another four or at least two years, the result would be a much greater national maturity.

While the debate about the educational and social justification for the extension of collegiate education goes on, there has in fact been an almost phenomenal growth in college enrolment. In the early years of the century, the proportion of American youth who went to college was not larger than the proportion in Europe, but by 1952, America has exceeded the proportion in most countries of the world. The years of depression and the second World War checked the rate of growth, but special provisions for the higher education of demobilised soldiers have since pushed up enrolment even more steeply. After the war, the State offered facilities of higher education to millions who would otherwise have never gone to college. Once this practice was introduced, the general social atmosphere ensured that enrolment in colleges would not fall. Education is one of the most powerful instruments of social mobility in the United States. Today, college education is regarded as a condition of advancement in almost all spheres of life.

Another factor which has helped to swell the number of college entrants is the diversification of courses at the collegiate stage. This broadening of the pattern of education is one of the major American contributions to the educational practice of the world. The case for diversification has now been almost universally accepted at the secondary stage. Diversification at the University stage is still an almost exclusively American phenomenon. As secondary education becomes more and more diversified, the traditional type of collegiate education fails to meet the requirements of a large number of school leavers. They demand facilities for continuing at a higher level what they have done in secondary schools. Diversification at the

collegiate stage is thus an inevitable consequence of diversification at the secondary stage. This development is inescapable.

The factors mentioned above were in any case favouring the growth in numbers at the collegiate stage. The bulge in the birth rate during the war year has given a further impetus to this tendency. The increase in enrolment in the elementary school is already a fact and the pressure is now being felt at the secondary stage. It is estimated that collegiate education will feel the full impact of this increase by 1961. This will, it is said, push up the numbers in colleges from about 2.5 million today to about 6.5 million in 1961-65.

The increase in college population which has already taken place is posing many problems for American educationists. It has been felt for some years that the standard of college teachers has fallen and is still falling. One of the main reasons for this is that greater prizes are offered in other professions to men of comparable education and ability. As in India, in America also there has been a marked drift of men of first rate ability from the teaching into other professions. Formerly, the Ph.D. was regarded as preparation for teaching in a University or College. Today, a large proportion of the Ph.D. is deserting academic institutions for administration, commerce and industry. At present only about 30 per cent of the college teachers have a doctorate though the proportion is higher in the Universities. With the enormous expansion in college population that is now anticipated, the proportion is bound to fall.

It is not surprising that in such a situation, the question of entry into colleges and Universities should assume a new importance. As in India, many people are thinking of restricting the flow of high school-leavers into colleges. American educationists show a fairly sharp difference of opinion on this point. One school of thought, for reasons which have been indicated above, advocate expansion of facilities to meet the desire for higher education on a universal scale. Some of the State Universities have a provision that any pupil who completes the school course is entitled to admission to the University. Fortunately for higher education in America, every one who is thus eligible does not elect to go to the University. If everyone who completed secondary education opted for college, the number of collegiate students in 1961-65 would perhaps be nearer 10 million !

The estimated figure of 6·5 million is itself almost unmanageable. Ten million in Universities would be beyond the capacity of even a country so rich as the United States. Universities have adopted various devices to limit the number of entrants. Even State Universities which are required by law to admit every eligible applicant get round by leaving it open to faculties to refuse him enrolment. Cases have been reported where a pupil after admission into the University has been rejected by one faculty after another. The process has sometimes taken a year or more but finally he has to leave because no faculty would accept him. Sometimes, students refused by all other faculties have crowded into the faculty of physical education ! Serious educationists recognise that this is a most unsatisfactory way of dealing with the situation. It is far better to limit numbers in Universities in an open and explicit manner. Provided the selection is based on merit and no special consideration is paid to wealth or family, such restriction of admission into the University is by no means incompatible with democracy.

AN INDIAN LOOKS AT AMERICAN EDUCATION

IV—Some General Comments

In the three earlier studies, I have indicated some of the strong points and weaknesses of American education. Its deep concern for providing adequate openings to the young truly justifies the description of America as the land of hope and opportunity. This has sometimes led to the growth of a social climate in which too great a price has been placed on success. In the anxiety to ensure that no one fails, standards have sometimes been lowered to a point below what is compatible with national interests. This, as I have already said, applies especially to secondary education.

Apart from the value placed on success, there is one other reason why standards have sometimes been lowered to suit the requirements of the least able among the children and the adolescents. It would not be unfair to say that Americans have by and large a more sentimental attitude towards children than European or Asians. There are probably good historic reasons for this. Many of the earlier immigrants into America were young men who had led a hard life in childhood. Able and ambitious but suffering from dire poverty, they left their own homeland because it did not offer them the scope for their full development. Once they arrived in America and made a success of their lives, they must have felt that their children should not lack the opportunity which had been denied to them. Greater consideration, one may almost say softness for children may also have been a reaction from European practice. Under the influence of the Church and the trade guilds, children in Europe had a pretty hard times especially from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution till the middle of the nineteenth century. American children enjoy by comparison a degree of freedom and consideration which astonishes the visitor from abroad.

The history of America is also perhaps responsible for another characteristic American development. This is the craze for conti-

nual change in American life and education. New fashions sweep across America like wildfire across the prairie. The fact that Americans are derived from many different races, traditions and cultures naturally ensures that no particular tradition or culture has a special hold on the whole group. The existence side by side of different modes of belief and behaviour shakes man's faith in the permanence of any social pattern. It was only the ambitious and the energetic who left their homelands to carve out a new future in America. This has given further strength to the American readiness to accept innovation and change. Because they were able and ambitious; they were willing to take risks. Novelty had no terror for them. In many cases, these immigrants had no devotion for the institutions of their own country. They were rebels and had left their country because they were not prepared to submit to existing conditions. With this mental background, it is not surprising that the tradition of stability and inertia should be weaker in America than in European or Asian societies.

The American fondness for novelty and experiment is felt also in education. In every field of education, more experiments are performed in America than in perhaps the whole of the rest of the world. Almost every year, someone or other comes up with new solutions for the educational problems at different stages. Nor are supporters for these new panaceas lacking. The fact that there is no central direction or control makes it easier to try out new solutions on a local basis. The result is that American education seems to be in a state of continual turmoil, at least on the surface.

I have used the phrase *on the surface* deliberately. In spite of the craze for change and innovation, educational patterns in America have not changed basically. This statement may appear paradoxical but the paradox is explained if we remember our earlier discussion about the shaping of educational policy in America. We then saw that in spite of the emphasis on local autonomy, the great national organisations, the United States Office of Education, the State Departments and the Teacher Training Colleges have a deep influence on educational theory and practice. These are all stabilising factors, but what is more surprising is that even the multiplicity of local authorities acts in the end as a conservative force. There are about 60,000 local authorities in America. The

corollary is that no change, however revolutionary or far-reaching it may be, can become effective throughout the country at the same time. All these authorities must be convinced about the need and practicability of the change. What generally happens is that some of the local authorities go in for the innovation but others cling to the old practice. The result is a kind of dynamic equilibrium maintained by the interplay of conflicting forces on the local and the national level.

The development of the American people has influenced education and general life in many other ways. It was only the able, the energetic and the discontented who left their homelands for America. A majority of them succeeded beyond their wildest expectations. The general atmosphere of the country is therefore one of hope and optimism. This is so pervasive that it immediately strikes even a casual visitor. In America every young man or woman feels that there is no limit to what he or she can achieve. The only limitations are those imposed by a person's own capacity. The atmosphere of optimism has led to growth of confidence and self-assertion among the people. This is all to the good but at times it leads also to an attitude that is hardly distinguishable from cocksureness. Even friendly foreigners are sometimes struck by the American readiness to solve problems for everybody. We in India perhaps share this character of offering free advice to the rest of the world! In the case of America, this outlook has been further strengthened by the strong evangelical tradition of the early American settlers. They left their homes for the sake of freedom of conscience and were generally deeply religious and devout persons. The religious temper has become diluted in modern America but the attitude of evangelism persists.

I would also like to refer to a social practice which has become widespread in America in the last few decades. This is the practice of paying the children for helping at home. Such payment is undesirable not only educationally but even more from the larger viewpoint of social cohesion. Educationally, it is undesirable because it brings the money motive into the life of the child at an unnaturally early stage. If a young child of 10 or 12 is paid for looking after a younger brother or sister or for helping the

parent with the chores at home, it begins to think of all services in terms of money and money alone. This carries over into his educational work. The child then begins to look upon his studies purely in terms of their monetary utility. This shows in both the choice of subjects and the attitude towards graduation from school or college. Pupils tend to choose subjects not for their educational or cultural significance, but merely as a short-cut to obtain a certificate which will raise their value in the employment market. It also leads many pupils to devote as little time as possible to education proper and utilize all their spare time in earning additional money. It is a quite common practice for high school children or college youth to spend their vacations in working at different jobs which have no relation whatever to their studies. This may be justified where students have to do such jobs as they cannot otherwise pay their educational expenses. Such students deserve both support and admiration, but where it is not necessary for the student to earn his or her living, it is surely a misuse of time needed for education if the vacations are spent on jobs which have nothing to do with their studies. It is a social wastage if undergraduates majoring in physics or philosophy spend three to four months a year washing dishes instead of devoting themselves to further studies in their subjects. In European or Indian universities, students are expected to, and often do, a great deal of additional reading during their vacations. Standards in high schools and colleges in America cannot rise sufficiently unless it is recognized that during the period of tutelage, the principal, if not the sole preoccupation of the pupil should be to study and prepare himself for future responsibilities.

The social consequences of paying small children for work at home seem even more serious. Such payment tends to weaken the sense of family solidarity. Since the family is the basic unit of society, any weakening of family loyalties is bound to lead to some loss in the sense of social obligation. A child needs not only sustenance, but affection and care from its parents. In return, it must also learn to serve parents and other members of the family with affection and care. The intrusion of the money motive in such relations begins to undermine the natural bonds which hold the family together. If a child is taught to expect payment for carrying out what is after all a family obligation, why shouldn't mothers and fathers

also be paid for doing things for children ? The absurdity of this question should help to highlight the intrinsic absurdity of paying children for doing things at home. Children should, of course, receive some pocket money mainly to learn the use of money. Occasionally a parent may also like to reward the special effort of a child in some special way. This should be preferably in the form of a gift from parent to child and should not in any way be a payment of wages in any sense.

I will conclude this brief study by referring to one other paradox in the American educational scene. Americans may be regarded as a nation of individualists par excellence. At the same time, Americans exhibit a passion for organisation which is perhaps unequalled. Every aspect of life is sought to be reduced into a definite pattern of behaviour. This is done through organisations which encroach upon what is often left in other countries to the individual's personal choice. We find the same craving for organisation in the schools. Not only studies but even games, recreation and cultural activities are organised. This American passion for tidiness and organisation sometimes goes to such lengths that very little opportunity is left for individual choice, or initiative by the pupils. I have heard American college students complain that they have hardly any sphere of activity which they can call personal. While on the one hand they seem to have the greatest freedom in choosing the pattern of studies, once they have made their selection they become like cogs in a machine.

nual change in American life and education. New fashions sweep across America like wildfire across the prairie. The fact that Americans are derived from many different races, traditions and cultures naturally ensures that no particular tradition or culture has a special hold on the whole group. The existence side by side of different modes of belief and behaviour shakes man's faith in the permanence of any social pattern. It was only the ambitious and the energetic who left their homelands to carve out a new future in America. This has given further strength to the American readiness to accept innovation and change. Because they were able and ambitious; they were willing to take risks. Novelty had no terror for them. In many cases, these immigrants had no devotion for the institutions of their own country. They were rebels and had left their country because they were not prepared to submit to existing conditions. With this mental background, it is not surprising that the tradition of stability and inertia should be weaker in America than in European or Asian societies.

The American fondness for novelty and experiment is felt also in education. In every field of education, more experiments are performed in America than in perhaps the whole of the rest of the world. Almost every year, someone or other comes up with new solutions for the educational problems at different stages. Nor are supporters for these new panaceas lacking. The fact that there is no central direction or control makes it easier to try out new solutions on a local basis. The result is that American education seems to be in a state of continual turmoil, at least on the surface.

I have used the phrase *on the surface* deliberately. In spite of the craze for change and innovation, educational patterns in America have not changed basically. This statement may appear paradoxical but the paradox is explained if we remember our earlier discussion about the shaping of educational policy in America. We then saw that in spite of the emphasis on local autonomy, the great national organisations, the United States Office of Education, the State Departments and the Teacher Training Colleges have a deep influence on educational theory and practice. These are all stabilising factors, but what is more surprising is that even the multiplicity of local authorities acts in the end as a conservative force. There are about 60,000 local authorities in America. The

corollary is that no change, however revolutionary or far-reaching it may be, can become effective throughout the country at the same time. All these authorities must be convinced about the need and practicability of the change. What generally happens is that some of the local authorities go in for the innovation but others cling to the old practice. The result is a kind of dynamic equilibrium maintained by the interplay of conflicting forces on the local and the national level.

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